

Fashion, heritage and family: new and old in the Georgian country house

Abstract

This article explores the material culture of the eighteenth century aristocracy through a detailed analysis of the Leigh Family of Stoneleigh Abbey. Drawing on a succession of detailed inventories and a large collection of receipted bills the article explores changes and continuities in the spatiality of material culture at Stoneleigh and, in particular, the ways in which old and new co-existed through the differential construction and use of domestic space. On the basis of this evidence we argue that conspicuous consumption and positional goods were only one aspect of methodologies of distinction in the complex semiotics of status expressed through country house interiors. Rank, dignity and lineage were also expressed through older goods and goods with 'patina' value.

Introduction

A 1786 inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire noted the contents of a 'lumber room' used for storing furniture not currently in use. Amongst other things, there were six part-gilded walnut chairs with crimson upholstery, ten 'old high back chairs' with yellow silk damask covers, four walnut chairs with needlework seats, seven walnut chairs with matted bottoms, a satin covered easy chair, two japanned tea tables, a gilt-framed cabinet, a pillow and claw table with a painted top, and a 'large new Wilton carpet'.¹ This range of high quality goods, some old and some new, make it a microcosm of the country house and the consumption practices of wealthy elites. Thinking about how these things came to be here; where they had come from, and why they had been stored in this way rather than simply being disposed of, links this room to a number of fundamental debates centred on the histories of consumption and social identity during the eighteenth century. It highlights the importance of heritage and patina alongside fashion and taste in shaping both the material culture of the country house and elite status and identity.

Elite consumption has been characterised in many different ways, each perspective drawing on a different understanding of the nature and definition of identity.² For Veblen, elites were distinguished by conspicuous consumption as a mechanism for communicating status and power. Central to this process were what we might now term positional goods – those with the capacity to mark and broadcast economic and cultural wealth.³ The country house itself might be

seen as the ultimate positional good, but what Christie calls 'prestige pieces' of furniture also expressed the status of the owner.⁴ Gilded mirrors and sconces, marble tables, and rich upholstery and tapestries were prime examples of 'the Old Luxury' which, de Vries argues, 'served primarily as a marker, a means of discriminating between people, times and places'.⁵ These things were distinguished by their materials and workmanship (in part an echo of the restrictions of sumptuary laws), but above all by their cost. For example, the bed trimmings for Walpole's green velvet bed at Houghton cost £1219 3s 11d, a sum which was perhaps four times the annual income of many country gentlemen.⁶ And yet spending power alone was not enough to distinguish the elite, especially at a time when nabobs, plantation owners and industrialists were able to amass vast fortunes and buy country estates, and when new families were being admitted to the peerage in larger numbers than in earlier times.⁷

Central to elite identity and to their social distinction was the idea of taste, which refined sensibilities and restrained luxury by providing aesthetic limits to 'exuberance and sensuality'.⁸ According to Bourdieu, elites are able to differentiate themselves from the lower orders through their consumption of goods with coded meanings only accessible to those with the necessary cultural capital.⁹ Greig's analysis of the *Beau Monde* makes just this point. What distinguished this group was not so much their wealth, although they were generally extremely rich people. Rather, it was a quality that Lord Chesterfield described in 1755 as a certain 'je ne scay quoy, which other people of fashion acknowledge'.¹⁰ This mention of fashion is important. Seen by McKendrick as the vehicle of emulation-led consumer behaviour, fashion is the restless pursuit of modish and novel things – part of the so-called New Luxury that was linked closely to commercial growth.¹¹ But this is not what Lord Chesterfield meant. Whilst being up-to-date was important to elite consumers, fashion in this context might better be understood in terms of refined taste and a set of goods and practices which connoted rank and dignity – something which approaches Veblen's 'most excellent goods' and Bourdieu's notion of distinction.¹²

Whilst the *Beau Monde* might be seen as a largely closed group, taste could be acquired and refined through education, visiting and socialising. What could not be bought or learned,

however, was heritage: in part constructed and communicated through a distinct material culture that continued to place value on the Old Luxury. Silverware, fine furniture, art collections and the like could be purchased, but inherited goods and a gallery full of titled ancestors could not. This distinction was brought out in the eighteenth-century critique of nabobs and resurfaces in Dickens' styling of the nouveau riche 'Veneerings' in *Our Mutual Friend* and more recently in Alan Clark's famous dismissal of Michael Hesseltine as a man who bought his own furniture.¹³ The 'patina glow of history' afforded by the inherited house and estate was therefore central to a distinct aristocratic mode of consumption.¹⁴ McCracken has argued that patina became less important through the eighteenth century, as novelty increasingly dominated consumer motivations.¹⁵ However, whilst elite consumers certainly pursued novelty and fashion, patina indubitably remained a central pillar of their material culture. This meant inherited goods, but also the inscription of pedigree onto material objects in the form of crests and arms – a process which added layers of meaning and made them integral to what Lewis calls an 'ecology of signs' that communicated the importance of family as lineage. Much earlier, Mingay argued that the country house gave its owner 'family status, a sense of identity, of achievement, and of permanence'.¹⁶ In furnishing their houses, landowners could deploy patina in a particular form of 'defensive consumption',¹⁷ using it to distinguish themselves from other groups by emphasising lineage. However, as Lewis makes clear, the symbolism of material goods went much further, with women according particular significance to a wide range of personal and familial objects, from paintings to bedding. Such objects have been explored as heirlooms, carefully bequeathed to favoured relatives, but they also form the centrepiece of what McCracken calls 'curatorial consumption' wherein inherited possessions are retained and displayed in a way that preserves and celebrates family connections.¹⁸ Each object has its own story, but the assemblage as a whole reflects the wider importance of heritage as a signifier of family in dynastic terms.

There was thus a tension in elite and especially aristocratic consumption between old and new, both in practical and philosophical terms. On the one hand, we have the imperative of fashion as the pursuit of novelty – a yearning for the new which Campbell sees as lying at the heart of

modern consumerism.¹⁹ Country houses were thus filled with new and costly items: positional goods which communicated power, wealth and taste. But the importance of lineage and social 'permanence' persisted and even grew, especially with the rising wealth and consumption of the middling sorts. Thus many objects within the house reflected conservatism, patina and the permanence of family. The co-existence of these various modes of consumption is increasingly recognised, but they are rarely brought together in a way that allows us to consider how particular consumers may have negotiated their way between them and what this meant for their domestic material culture and their social identities. There is a disconnect in the literature between histories of landed society, which have always been alive to the importance of heritage and longevity in aristocratic identities and status, and social and architectural histories of the country house, which highlight step-changes in styles and interiors according to periodic shifts in taste and fashion.²⁰ Too little account is taken of the mixture of old and new, both in terms of layout and the objects within the house, and the ways in which this reflected and constructed the identities of country house owners.

Case study: the Leighs of Stoneleigh Abbey

Our purpose here is to address these questions through close analysis of a single house and family: Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, the ancestral home of the Leighs. From this case study, we explore the ways in which fashion and conspicuous consumption were mediated by lineage, the inertia of existing goods and the curation of family. Stoneleigh Abbey, formerly a Cistercian Abbey, came into the Leigh's possession in 1571 when it was purchased by Thomas Leigh, a London merchant. A Baronetcy and a Barony were conferred during the seventeenth century and, through purchase and marriage, the estate grew in geographical scale and income. During the period of this study there were four owners of Stoneleigh Abbey. The third Lord Leigh, Edward (1684-1738), inherited the estates in 1710. His marriage to Mary Holbech (1705) had brought significant personal and real property, and mid-century rental incomes amounted to

£6795 per annum. The death of Thomas, the fourth Lord Leigh (1713-49) resulted in a period of minority ownership as his son, Edward, the fifth Lord Leigh (1749-86), was a mere seven years old when Thomas died. Edward came into his majority in 1763, but his mental health deteriorated from the late 1760s onwards and he was declared insane in 1774, dying in 1786. By this time rental incomes had grown to over £13,000 each year and they were destined to reach almost £20,000 by the early nineteenth century.²¹ Edward never married, died without issue and left the estate to his elder sister, the Honourable Mary Leigh (1736-1806). After twenty years in ownership she also died unmarried and childless in 1806, whereupon the estates were inherited by a junior branch of the family, the Leighs of Adelstrop. By the later eighteenth century then, despite demographic problems, the Leighs were amongst the wealthiest of Warwickshire landowners and, in the national context, were one of a select group of around four hundred 'great landlords', with incomes of over £10,000 and a commensurate 'style of living that distinguished them from the inferior ranks of landed society.'²²

With wealth and status came political and social responsibilities. Successive Leigh owners varied in their commitment to their parliamentary duties. Whereas the third Lord, Edward, rarely took his seat in the Lords, perhaps because of loyalty to the Stuarts, his grandson, the fifth Lord attended Parliament fairly regularly, although there is no sign of great political ambition.²³ The family participated in fashionable social events in provincial society, in London and beyond. The Cravens of Coombe Abbey, in Warwickshire, were long-standing friends with family connections: William Craven was Edward Leigh's (fifth Lord) maternal uncle and a trusted guardian during his minority, and his cousin, another William Craven, was a close friend from his student days in Oxford. Edward was a member of a scholarly music society, 'The Catch Club', in London and he also developed a network of sociability through his ongoing contact with Oxford University after graduation, being elected as the High Steward of the University in 1765.²⁴ Edward's elder sister, Mary developed her own social circles, initially when under the care of her aunt, Elizabeth Verney, near Hanover Square in London, and later at her house in Kensington Gore, London.²⁵ She also entertained at Stoneleigh and made frequent trips with friends to Cheltenham.

Finally, the Leighs fulfilled their obligations in local society through charitable donations, including the provision of clothes and food for the poor, gifts of coal, donations to charity hospitals and the Church, and subscriptions to good works in nearby towns.²⁶ Whilst they were not especially active politically nor central to the social life of the country, the Leighs were representative of the broader landed elites of which they formed a part, in terms of wealth, political power and their activities in London and in the local community. They themselves had been *nouveaux riches* arrivals to landed society in the sixteenth century but, through the gradual accumulation of land and power, and centuries of residence in a country house and estate, the Leighs were an established feature of local and national landed society. Spending on the Abbey and contents was a means by which this power, privilege and permanence could be communicated.

Unfortunately, little remains of the Leighs' correspondence beyond regular exchanges about the management of the estate, much of them taking place through the steward rather than family members. We therefore have few direct insights into their motivations and must infer these from other sources. In this respect the archive serves us much better. Drawing on a succession of detailed inventories and a large collection of receipted bills, we are able to assess in some detail the changing spatiality of material culture at Stoneleigh Abbey, highlighting in particular the ways in which old and new co-existed through differential construction and use of domestic space. Our argument is threefold. Firstly, we demonstrate that elite households were not simply engaged in competitive consumption of new positional goods. Fashion, taste and novelty were important, but older goods were also valued. This made the material culture of the country house a complex mix of old and new. Secondly, the use of older and sometimes unfashionable objects reflected a different culture of consumption amongst the titled elite – one that continued to value patina as a marker of rank, dignity and pedigree. Along with their estates and houses, inherited goods gave the landed elites their sense of status, identity and permanence.²⁷ Thirdly, goods could have a range of uses and meanings. Older goods had a functional importance in large houses with lots of space to fill, and reflected ideals of oeconomy and thrift.²⁸ They also formed a tangible connection

to family, thus providing pleasure and emotional comfort by linking the individual to their familial past, as well as underlining ideas of lineage and dynasty.

Fashion, status and lineage

Even with a general tendency to exercise traditional merits of good stewardship and to live within their means, the level of income enjoyed by the Leighs clearly gave the family considerable scope when it came to spending.²⁹ Unsurprisingly, there is plenty of evidence that they were engaged in fashionable and conspicuous consumption. Most obvious in this regard was the construction in the 1720s of a massive extension (the west range) by the Warwick architect-builder Francis Smith, and its subsequent decoration by a range of craftsmen from Warwick and London (Plate 1).³⁰ This signalled something of the wealth, ambition and taste of Edward, third Lord Leigh (1684-1738), and the ideas that he had picked up on his Grand Tour. Its sheer size made this project a conspicuous show of wealth, but its finished magnificence belies the rather cautious approach taken by Edward. Its layout was rigid and a little old-fashioned, resembling the 'formal house' which Girouard argues was already being replaced by freer arrangements of space characteristic of the 'social house' emerging in the middle decades of the eighteenth century.³¹ Moreover, like other country house owners, Edward eschewed architects of national prominence and engaged a local man who had a reputation for economy as well as good design.³²

The reasons for this apparent thrift are uncertain, as is the slow pace at which Edward moved to furnish and occupy the rooms in the west range – although Wilson and Mackley make clear that lengthy delays were not unusual in such building projects.³³ Efforts were concentrated onto a suite of rooms at the northern end of the range which became known as the Great Apartment. A common feature of country houses, such great or state apartments were originally conceived as the rooms in which the monarch would stay if they deigned to visit. This function had become largely redundant by the 1720s as George I and George II did little to encourage aristocrats to plan for visits by royalty. That state apartments continued to be built reflects their importance in

marking the rank and dignity of the owner, operating in effect as a badge of aristocratic status, and their use as 'rooms of parade' through which guests could walk to enjoy the fine furniture and paintings on show.³⁴ Lord Leigh's Great Apartment was decorated accordingly. The walls were lined with stylar wainscot which Gomme describes as 'the mark of a conservative but still swagger taste in the 1720s'.³⁵ The effect was heightened by the addition of walnut and gilt furniture, large gilt-framed mirrors and rich drapery in crimson velvet. Most impressive was the 'crimson velvet bed and counterpane lined with crimson silk' which was valued at over £300 in 1738.³⁶ As Cornforth, Beard and others argue, this emphasis on traditional forms of luxury was common amongst the aristocracy.³⁷ It was still evident in the work undertaken by Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, after he came of age in 1763. His refurbishment of many rooms in west range included the outlay of over £470 on fitting out the chapel in an integrated scheme of crimson Genoa velvet and broadcloth, trimmed with gold fringe, which was repeated in hangings, kneelers, cushions and chairs.³⁸ At the same time, the Great Hall was lavishly decorated with an elaborate neo-classical scheme incorporating ornate fireplaces, Corinthian columns and finely executed stuccowork (Plate 2).

These lavish interiors along with the grandeur of the west range were impressive and conspicuous displays of wealth, but they were not fashionable in the sense of being modish. Smith's 'aggressively anti-Palladian design' put it add odds with other houses being built in the 1720s, even by the architect himself, and reinforce Arnold's critique of the stylistic approach to architectural history.³⁹ By the time it was fully furbished and occupied in the 1760s, it was distinctly dated – something which Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, apparently appreciated as there exist a number of rather fanciful designs in his own hand for rendering the frontage more fashionable, either through the addition of porticos and domes or refronting the entire structure in a neo-gothic style.⁴⁰ These designs may have reflected Edward's wish to stamp his own identity and wealth on the fabric of his grandfather's legacy; or they may have been an attempt to create a more fashionable house, perhaps in response to the building schemes being undertaken by Warwickshire neighbours.⁴¹ Whatever prompted them, the more sober designs for a new north

range commissioned from professionals suggest rather conservative taste, as does Edward's choice of decorative scheme for the Great Hall. Rather than adopt the designs put forward by his architect, Timothy Lightholer, which have rococo decorative work and niches containing classical statues, he adopted a scheme depicting the trials of Hercules in a series of wall medallions and in a hugely impressive but unfashionably baroque ceiling panel.⁴² This work, then, could hardly have placed the fifth Lord Leigh at the cutting edge of fashion in the sense of new taste in interior decoration or new ways of entertaining in the 'social house'.⁴³ However, the subject matter of the designs and the quality of workmanship most definitely communicated his refined taste, and affirmed the continued importance of those goods which de Vries identifies as Old Luxury.⁴⁴

There was thus a creative tension between old and new in the material culture of the aristocracy; but conservative taste was not the only counter-balance to fashionable excess apparent in the fabric of Stoneleigh Abbey. It was common for titled landowners to write their family status into their decorative schemes: we see it, for instance, in the elaborate coat of arms over the fire in the hall at Sudbrook Park in Surrey; the family motto engraved into the overmantel in the hall at Hanbury Hall in Worcestershire, and the heraldic devices included in the windows over the staircase at Lamport Hall in Northamptonshire.⁴⁵ The Leighs were no exceptions to this. In the Great Apartment, Edward, third Lord Leigh, had his coronet and arms incorporated into the capitals of the pilasters. His grandson included his coat of arms in each of the sketches he made for re-fronting the west range, and unicorns, central to the family crest, were the key motif of the frieze in the Great Hall. These symbols of titled status were repeated on a range of luxury items, carrying the ecology of signs across the house and beyond.⁴⁶ As Morrall has argued, such ornamentation was important in shaping the meaning of material objects, forming a 'mode of visual address' which proclaimed definable social and ideological values. It transformed objects into what Berg calls 'signifiers of family and memory' and rendered them symbols of heritage, pedigree and power.⁴⁷

These overt signs were complemented by a collection of family portraits which spoke of the lineage and connections of the Leighs. Some were the product of new commissions, including

paintings of Thomas, fourth Lord Leigh, and his wife, and another of Mary Leigh, Thomas' daughter. Others, such as the portraits of John Craven, Thomas Holdbech, Mary Isham (a cousin who married into the Ishams of Lamport Hall) and the Honourable Lady Rockingham (the mother of Eleanor, wife of the 2nd Lord Leigh) came to Stoneleigh as a result of marriages. Inventories taken in 1749 and 1750 show these paintings hanging in the Picture Gallery alongside portraits of Queen Elizabeth I and the Earl of Stafford. Significantly, they remained there after the death of Thomas, fourth Lord Leigh, whilst twenty-two 'old prints and pictures' were removed.⁴⁸ As Retford has argued, this kind of collection was often deployed as a 'complex pictorial family tree', designed to communicate dynastic lines and wider familial connections.⁴⁹ Deploying material objects in this way was not an exclusively elite practice – the middling sort, as Harvey notes, also viewed them as markers of time and memory. Moreover, aristocratic practices of writing family trees and genealogies also extended into the middling sort, with diaries and commonplace books forming important mechanisms for the construction of the family as lineage, men in particular being engaged with writing stories of themselves and their ancestors to pass to their sons and grandsons.⁵⁰ What distinguished the elite was the character, quantity and quality of 'family' objects: they had architecture and picture galleries rather than commonplace books.⁵¹ These spoke both to social equals and to more casual visitors, underlining the heritage, rank and standing of the family in county and national society.

If some contemporary commentators thought that Henrietta Cavendish had gone a little too far in her display of family connections at Welbeck, people coming to the country house expected to see paintings of the owner's aristocratic ancestors.⁵² Mrs Lybbe Powys, that most observant of casual visitors, described Wilton House as a 'charming though ancient mansion'. She was struck by the many 'valuable pieces of painting and sculpture', but felt that a Vandyke portrait of the Pembroke family deserved 'particular observation'. Similarly, at Knole House, she marvelled at the richness of the decoration, including the bed and chairs in one of the apartments valued at £8000 and the treasures recently brought from Rome by the Duke of Dorset. Again, though, she placed emphasis on 'portraits of the family for many generations'.⁵³ As at Stoneleigh Abbey, these

signalled the family as peers of the realm: established members of the elite who could trace both their lineage and their contemporary networks.

Heritage was also carried and communicated through the persistent material presence of the house and its contents – something far less common amongst the middling sort. The survival of relic features reinforced the role of the country house as a symbol and receptacle for ‘dynastic heritage, longevity, and inherited wealth’, but also reflected a form of curatorial consumption through which elites preserved and celebrated their dynastic family.⁵⁴ At Stoneleigh Abbey, the layout and much of the decorative work undertaken by Francis Smith in the 1720s was retained through subsequent refurbishments in the eighteenth century and beyond. Most striking in this regard were the rooms in the Great Apartment, laid out for Edward, third Lord Leigh, as part of the original design of the West Range. These were lined in unpainted oak panelling, with a complete set of pilasters down the wall facing the windows and pairs of three-quarter columns at either end, all in the Corinthian order and topped with a complete entablature with carved mouldings. The overall effect was very formal, yet it remained unaltered through subsequent changes in taste which might have encouraged its painting or removal in favour of lighter plasterwork, such as that proposed for the Plaid Parlour.⁵⁵ By the early nineteenth century, when Jane Austen’s family visited the Reverend Thomas Leigh (their relative who had recently inherited the Stoneleigh estate), Cassandra complained that these rooms were ‘rather gloomy with brown wainscot and dark crimson furniture so we never use them except to walk through to the old picture gallery’. Such reactions to old state apartments were not uncommon, those at Chatsworth House being described by Horace Walpole as *triste*.⁵⁶ Given such sentiments, it is remarkable that these rooms so often retained their essential décor. At Stoneleigh Abbey, the panelling, mirrors and even the choice of drapery survived the torrent of spending and refurbishment undertaken by the Rev Thomas’ nephew and successor, James Henry Leigh (1765-1823). The best bedroom and its dressing room were joined to form a library, but the dark panelling and pilasters remained.

Much of the explanation for this continuity lies in the role of these rooms as symbols of the

family's lineage and inherited wealth. Cornforth suggests that, as early as the middle decades of the eighteenth century, state apartments had become 'objects symbolic of the past to be admired and preserved rather than used'.⁵⁷ Alongside admiration for their grandeur and dignity was the tangible link with earlier generations – a reminder of the established status of the family which could afford both emotional and what de Vries terms 'social comfort'.⁵⁸ Retaining the Great Apartment largely unchanged might be interpreted in terms of defensive consumption, the Leighs marking their difference from lesser families who lacked title or lineage, and underlining their permanence within local society. Without personal sources, it is impossible to be sure, but these continuities had the manifest effect of marking lineage-family in the material culture of the house, and closely paralleled processes taking place in other country houses.⁵⁹

Out with the old?

Perhaps we should not be too surprised at this continuity in decorative schemes. In very practical terms, plasterwork and panelling were time-consuming and costly to remove. A much easier way to transform rooms was through the addition of new furniture, drapery or paintings. Indeed, it is the progressive renewal of such items that defines the so-called Diderot effect.⁶⁰ His essay, *Regrets on Parting with my Old Dressing Gown*, begins with the author replacing his old gown with a new one and then feeling that his desk seems shabby in comparison. Changing this makes his wall hangings appear worn and so on until the whole room has been renewed – the result of a restless dissatisfaction with the current state of things. For many elite families, this desire for change and novelty operated in creative tension with the retention of older goods which carried patina and family associations.

If we trace the purchases of furnishings made by the Leighs over the course of the eighteenth century, we see an ongoing process of acquisition. There was a huge wave of spending after Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, came of age in 1764 and another, even more spectacular, when James Henry Leigh inherited the Stoneleigh estates in 1813.⁶¹ During these surges, an enormous

quantity of furniture, books, china, glassware, lamps, instruments, paintings and drapery was carried up from suppliers in London or, more occasionally, neighbouring towns.⁶² There was also a great deal of wallpapering and painting undertaken at these times. In 1765, Bromwich and Leigh presented a bill for papering about 30 rooms, each being given a different treatment. On several occasions, they noted the work involved in removing earlier fittings. In a bedroom referred to as Number 11, for instance, they charged £1 4s for '6 days work taking down gilt leather and putting up 90 yards of silver wetting stamp'd'.⁶³ More occasionally, they worked around existing room features. Lord Leigh's bed chamber was hung with '147 Yards of painted paper to match a Chintz' and was part of a decorative scheme that also included the traditional luxury of silvered leather hangings retained from an earlier period.⁶⁴ There was also a steadier flow of goods into the house. Chairs or tables were bought on at least seven other occasions, the former usually coming in sets of six or twelve and sometimes arrived in large numbers. In 1710, for example, Edward, third Lord Leigh, purchased sixteen japanned and eighteen walnut chairs from Thomas Burroughs. 26 years later, he bought a further six sets of walnut chairs from John Taylor. These included a set described as carved; three sets with compass seats, and two that were matted.⁶⁵ More common, though, were purchases of one or two items: a tea table and dressing glass in 1711; a chimney glass and mahogany voider in 1738, and two 'dressing boxes with landscapes' in 1790.⁶⁶ As a result, sets or single pieces were introduced into existing assemblages, usually in a way that conformed to the existing material culture, character and use of the room.

It is often difficult to know for certain where new pieces were placed within the house. The sets of walnut chairs bought by the third Lord Leigh in 1736 were probably destined for the new rooms in the west range, and the painted dressing boxes acquired in 1790 by his grand-daughter, the Honourable Mary Leigh (1736-1806) were placed in a guest bedroom.⁶⁷ More generally, though, bills and inventories do not provide sufficient detail to be certain where new furniture was located. Things are much clearer with paintings, not least because they are much more carefully described in the inventories. Most of the paintings acquired in the 1740s by Thomas, fourth Lord Leigh, were placed in the Picture Gallery (see Figure 1), including the majority of the

new family portraits.⁶⁸ This was a substantial increment to the smaller collection recorded at the death of Edward, third Lord Leigh, and rendered the gallery a key part in Stoneleigh Abbey's ecology of signs.⁶⁹ Whilst the effect in the Picture Gallery was diluted somewhat by the inclusion of a number of old prints and the occasional landscape painting, Thomas chose to hang his set of twenty-four racing prints in the more private Common Dining Parlour. They clearly did not form part of his public construction of family.

Additions of furniture and paintings may have been driven by progressive dissatisfaction with what was already in place. Again, the absence of ego documents makes it hard to know with certainty, but, if discontentment was an important motivating factor, its impact was slow and partial. This was partly because rooms outlived their owners and each successive generation made its own additions, but it was also a result of the persistence of older pieces, retained through inertia or design – a feature also noted by Ponsonby.⁷⁰ At Stoneleigh, we see many of the sets of walnut chairs bought by Edward, third Lord Leigh, being kept through the eighteenth century and beyond. Most notable amongst these were the seven walnut and gilt chairs with seats and backs embroidered with classical figures and the monograms of Edward and his wife Mary Holbech. This kind of ornamental feature is particularly important in adding meaning to objects, making them highly personal pieces: retained even when much of the other furniture was sold in 1981.⁷¹ Similarly, if less personally, the large gilt-framed mirrors in the Best Drawing Room remained in place; an eight-day clock purchased in 1735 appears in all the subsequent inventories, in each case sitting on or at the bottom of the main staircase, and Thomas' family portraits and racing prints were still hung in 1806.⁷² The list could continue, but the point is clear: the Leighs chose to retain many items from previous generations. In part, this was linked to virtues of thrift and good domestic management – a central part of both middling sort and elite identities.⁷³ The importance of oeconomy is apparent from several bills for the re-upholstery of furniture at Stoneleigh Abbey and from the broader management of spending through three generations of the Leigh family.⁷⁴ However, the retention of inherited goods also suggests the continued importance of patina in constructing and maintaining family as lineage – a central

tenet in the self-identity of the aristocracy, given permanence in the material culture of the country house and its contents.⁷⁵

The old was, however, balanced by the new; retention was matched by renewal, and lineage was weighed against fashion. We can see this happening piecemeal as goods listed in one inventory disappear from the next, perhaps as a result of progressive renewal as each generation sought to add its own layer of material culture to the family home. More occasionally, removals were dramatic – a situation seen most obviously in the sales which punctuated the stories of many country houses.⁷⁶ At Stoneleigh Abbey, there were two sales, although both were partial clearances and dominated by purchases made by family members. The first took place following the death of Edward, third Lord Leigh, in 1738. His widow, Mary, moved to a nearby house at Guys Cliff, taking with her small quantities of goods from two of the family rooms in the west range. From the Common Drawing Room, she took a range of decorative items including china, chocolate cups, a punch bowl and basin, and frustratingly anonymous ‘long images’. The Further Back Parlour was effectively stripped, with ‘all taken by my Lady Except two pair of Window Curtains, vallans & rods’.⁷⁷ Significantly, the principal rooms remained largely intact, the contents being secured by Edward’s son, Thomas, fourth Lord Leigh. A second clearance took place little more than ten years later when Thomas himself died in 1749. An inventory taken the following year of goods ‘now remaining at Stoneleigh Abbey’ shows that his widow, Catherine, took all the plate (valued at £936 12s 7d) and some furniture, whilst the linen, drinking glasses and a large quantity of household goods were apparently sold. Much of the furniture being disposed of came from bed chambers and servants’ rooms, the inventory noting that there was ‘nothing left’ or ‘all sold’ in several such rooms.⁷⁸ Again, most of the principal rooms were left largely untouched, despite the fact that the house would lie empty for the next fourteen years until Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, came of age. The sale thus cleared items that were marginal to the material culture of the family or that were specifically useful to or valued by Catherine as she set up house.⁷⁹ What remained were those items that carried patina and symbolised the family’s lineage. Read as curatorial consumption, this is especially significant as it places the trustees of the estate in the

role of curators of the family 'collection'.

Balancing retention and renewal was sometimes a response to the practicalities of managing a large house and negotiating the vicissitudes of dynastic fortune. The Leighs escaped the ignominy of insolvency and the associated sales of treasured possessions, but there were lengthy periods during which the house was effectively shut down. The period of the fifth Lord Leigh's minority was the most severe, but retrenchment and under-occupation of the house also marked the years between his official diagnosis of lunacy in 1774 and his eventual death in 1786. During such times, the symbolism of goods and their role in status or familial identity was vulnerable to more mundane considerations. Yet it is striking that certain spaces and goods were more resistant to these pressures than were others. Goods with high utility in terms of personal or social comfort – that is, the scope to give pleasure or signal familial status – may have been valued above more mundane or less symbolic goods. Their location within the country house meant that both Mingay's notion of permanence and the glow of patina clung to some rooms, whilst others were cleared or refurbished according to the prevailing taste. The elite could thus utilise both new and old within the county house, moving goods around in response to their shifting consumption strategies.

Rearranging the furniture

The movement of items between houses was common amongst landowners. Many of the tapestries at Hardwick Hall, for instance, came from Chatsworth and various items at Audley End were carried there from the Braybroke's other house at Billingbear. This movement of older goods into the house is seen most clearly at Stoneleigh Abbey in correspondence between John Franklin, the agent at the Leigh's house at Leighton Buzzard, and his counterpart at Stoneleigh, Samuel Butler. The two men discussed the transfer of a number of paintings to Stoneleigh in 1765, the time when Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, was refurnishing the house.⁸⁰ They included views of Venice and Rome, generally attributed to Giovanni Antonio Canal (1697-1768), 'fruit pieces'

and two portraits of King Charles, all of which were placed in the Breakfast and Dining Rooms. Together, these paintings helped to transform the appearance and character of these rooms in a manner which highlights how change could be brought about by moving around existing possessions as well as acquiring new goods.

Furniture and paintings were also moved between rooms, as new owners sought to imprint their character on the house. Between 1786 and 1806, when Mary Leigh had sole charge of the house, there was considerable movement of goods. She focused much of her attention on bed chambers, but the principal rooms were not immune from change. For example, a large mahogany bookcase and a writing table were moved from the Study to the Picture Gallery; a walnut spinet from Lord Leigh's Dressing Room also went to the Picture Gallery; a piano went from the Music Parlour to the Breakfast Room, and a mahogany box with battledores and shuttlecock moved from the Breakfast Room to the Copper Parlour.⁸¹ Paintings too were periodically moved from room to room. The portrait of Henry VIII, for example, moved from the intimacy of the Copper Parlour to the formality of the Picture Gallery where it was joined by one of the Pretender (not previously listed, but probably present in the house).⁸² Even wall coverings were moved around the house. The gilt leather hangings removed from bedroom Number 11 were rehung in another bedroom, Number 19, where Bromwich and Leigh charged for '8 Days work putting up the Old Silver leather and mending'.⁸³ This relocating of an Old Luxury may again reflect Edward's personal tastes, but it could also have represented a link to the past and to the family's deep roots in Stoneleigh. In all likelihood, it did both. Such attachment to the past is repeated in many country houses, for example in the repairs ordered by Sir John Griffin Griffin to the Jacobean plasterwork at Audley End and his reuse of several pieces of japanned furniture in the refurbished guest rooms.⁸⁴

Within this ebb and flow of goods, the lumber room held a particular significance as a holding place for furnishings not currently needed, but which might yet prove useful. As noted earlier, it was especially full in 1786, with nearly thirty walnut chairs, japanned and gilded cabinet ware, a carpet and an assortment of smaller items. Some of these things had probably been moved here

during the extensive refitting undertaken in the 1760s and had remained ever since.⁸⁵ The ten high back walnut chairs, for example, came from the Yellow Damask Room, in the old part of the house, which was refurnished in mahogany. The gilt-framed cabinet, meanwhile, was moved from the Best Green Room which itself disappeared from later inventories, at least as a name.⁸⁶ These items were seemingly surplus to requirements, perhaps viewed as unwanted elements of an earlier decorative scheme – a reminder that not everything was valued just because it belonged to a forebear. What the lumber provided was a space to hold goods before they were deployed elsewhere in the house.

Inevitably, this internal traffic in goods affected some rooms more profoundly than others. This was not a random process; it reflected the different ways in which rooms were conceived and used. Some were rendered fashionable whilst others symbolised family tradition. Of the principal reception rooms at Stoneleigh Abbey, change was most profoundly felt in the pair of rooms to the south of the hall. In the 1730s and 1740s they were described as a Plaid Parlour and Common Drawing Room, and were relatively sparsely furnished with walnut chairs, tables and side tables, japanned card and tea tables, and gilt and brass sconces.⁸⁷ The walls were apparently bare except for two 'long images' and a gilt framed pier glass. The presence of tea sets and chocolate cups in 1738 and a large amount of ornamental china in 1749 suggests use by the family in polite entertaining. A further £2 worth of china in cupboards and a large mahogany table valued at six guineas might also indicate that the room was used for dining, despite its name and the presence of a Common Dining Parlour at the back of the West Range. Yet what made these rooms distinctive was the plaid material used for curtains and covers on window seats and chairs. Here, the detail is telling, but can easily be over-interpreted. It might be seen as a sign of the allegedly Jacobite leanings of the Leighs in the early eighteenth century, but in reality plaid was common enough as a furnishing fabric. That said, it had been most popular around the turn of the eighteenth century and was rather dated by the late 1720s, the earliest point that it could have been introduced in these rooms – another indication that the Leighs, and other elite consumers, were not always driven by the dictates of the latest trend.⁸⁸

Practically all of this was swept away in the refurbishment ordered by his grandson, Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, who rendered the renamed Dining Parlour and Breakfast Room a model of refined sociability – in many ways the equivalent of the comfortable drawing room. By 1774, walnut had disappeared in favour of mahogany; the plaid was replaced by green damask drapery and upholstery, and the walls were hung with a range of family pictures and landscapes, including those brought up from Leighton Buzzard. There was also an organ and two music desks.⁸⁹ Edward's sister, Mary, made additional changes, initially adding a variety of smaller pieces of mahogany furniture including a Pembroke table, two pedestals and a writing desk, as well as a second dining table. These were accompanied by a tea chest, chess and draughts sets, two baize-topped card tables, and double-keyed harpsichord giving the rooms a more informal atmosphere and a range of recreational uses. After Edward's death, she modified the rooms further: changing the chairs for others (some with quilted Nankeen cushions), bringing in four small work tables, and removing the organ and harpsichord in favour of the piano mentioned earlier.⁹⁰ More paintings appeared on the walls, mostly landscapes or conversation pieces. These were fashionable and lively rooms, furnished somewhat in the manner depicted in Humphrey Repton's 'Modern Living Room', which he juxtaposed with the stuffy and old-fashioned formality of the 'Old Cedar Parlour'.⁹¹ The same contrast between new and old, fashion and tradition, can be seen between this suite of rooms and the Great Apartment situated the other side of the hall at Stoneleigh Abbey.

In common with state apartments at Kedleston, Audley End, Blenheim Palace, Stowe, Woburn Abbey and elsewhere, the Drawing Room and Brown Parlour, which formed part of the Great Apartment laid out by Edward, third Lord Leigh, showed a remarkable degree of continuity in their furnishing as well as their décor. Furniture was periodically moved between the two rooms, but their basic structure remained intact from the 1720s to the 1800s and beyond. There were crimson curtains, window seats and hangings; large and expensive gilt chimney and pier glasses; glass sconces with gilt frames; marble-topped or carved and gilded tables, and chairs to match. Walnut predominated in both rooms, which consistently contained two of the most striking sets

of chairs in the house: twelve walnut chairs with crimson velvet seats (acquired in 1710), and the seven gilt walnut framed chairs with embroidered seats and backs mentioned earlier. Change to this assemblage of Old Luxury was incremental and minor in the context of the overall feel of the rooms. In 1749 there was the equipage for tea: a favourite subject for historians concerned with the material culture of polite society.⁹² There was a japanned tea table, china dishes and saucers, a tea pot, handle cups and saucers, a sugar dish and slop basin. Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, added a round mahogany dining table, a spider leg table and a carved side table, along with two 'large India figures' and a small number of family portraits. Mary had a similarly muted impact, bringing in an oval music table, a pair of mahogany stands, a small square table, a pair of globes, a small glass case and three more family pictures.⁹³ The strong thread of continuity seen in the retention of early eighteenth-century walnut furniture and the oak panelling that so alarmed Cassandra Austen was further underlined by the growing number of family portraits, which heightened the importance of these rooms in marking dynastic heritage.

These rooms marked the Leigh's longevity and heritage; the lack of change spoke of continuity with earlier generations and the permanence of both the country house and the family. This could be seen as a form of curatorial consumption. Whilst her motives remain unclear, Mary's actions in restoring the crimson velvet bed to its original position are suggestive of a desire to reinforce tradition through the careful assemblage of key family goods. This was, in some ways, a reinstatement of Old Luxury, but it also had the effect of re-establishing the integrity of the Great Apartment, perhaps as a statement of rank and status, and a symbol of dynastic family identity.

Conclusions

We have argued here that, whilst the elite were engaged in conspicuous consumption, driven by notions of fashion, taste and distinction, these concerns were tempered by the persistence of the old alongside the new. Indeed, there is evidence of goods being retained even when broken.⁹⁴ This runs counter to many understandings of consumption as a dynamic process where novelty and

renewal are necessary as weapons of social distinction and/or to stave off the onset of boredom.⁹⁵ We see three main explanations for this characteristic of elite consumption, which are all clearly evidenced despite the paucity of personal documents in the archive. Firstly, there were good practical reasons for retaining old items even when new ones were being brought into the house. Country houses have a lot of rooms that required furnishing. Redeploying older but serviceable pieces to less public rooms (as when Mary Leigh moved walnut chairs upstairs into guest bedrooms) therefore made a great deal of sense. In part, this reflected values of oeconomy which were central to many landowners' attitudes to their estates and houses. The excesses of Veblenian conspicuous consumption sat in tension with responsibilities to tenants and other dependents, and with the imperative of preserving and enhancing the estate for future generations. As we have argued elsewhere, the Leighs were attuned to the idea that outgoings should be matched to income, with money being invested in building up the estate and in charitable or patrimonial works.⁹⁶ Even when wealth allowed the ready purchase of a whole range of new goods, older ones could and should still be mended, recycled and reused, perhaps elsewhere in the house – practices noted by Vickery and others.⁹⁷ At Stoneleigh, these imperatives might be seen in the reuse of leather wall hangings in bed chambers; the re-upholstery of furniture and the redeployment of furniture to other rooms.

Secondly, retaining old goods, especially those representative of Old Luxury, can also be viewed as a form of defensive consumption. This was a different way of marking rank and dignity; more in line with Greig's reading of fashion than the pursuit of the latest taste or the conspicuous consumption of positional goods. It was not just the country house which could provide landowners with a sense of permanence; its contents also signalled continuity, dynasty and lineage. Indeed, furniture, paintings and decorative schemes could be subtle and flexible symbols which gathered meaning from their context as well as their age, material qualities and familial associations. The contrast between the suites of rooms either side of the hall at Stoneleigh Abbey strongly suggests that the importance of patina did not fall equally on all goods and all domestic spaces; rather, it was contingent on what the objects were and where they lay in the house. Some

goods and rooms were deployed in a way that constructed, maintained and marked heritage, and which therefore helped to bolster an identity based on lineage and a sense of permanence. Others were more obviously markers of taste, refinement and power, and defined the aristocracy as the cultural as well as social elite. Both of these imperatives could coexist in the same house and the same landowner. Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, spent lavishly and tastefully, buying new furniture, drapery, silver, chinaware, books and pictures with which to fill Stoneleigh Abbey. Half a century later, James Henry Leigh did exactly the same. Yet both retained family portraits, many items of furniture, and the character of Great Apartment. These actions had the effect of reinforcing their identity through consumption practices which involved retaining the old as well as acquiring the new.

Thirdly, old goods could carry not just patina, but also family associations which brought comfort as well as status to the owner.⁹⁸ At Stoneleigh Abbey, this is most obviously seen in the set of embroidered and monogrammed chairs, but perhaps also in a reluctance to dispose of goods purchased and treasured by forebears: for example, the ensemble of decor and furniture created in the Great Apartment for Edward, third Lord Leigh. This again might be seen as defensive consumption; an attempt to mark out the status and lineage of the family and its long association with Stoneleigh Abbey. Aristocratic concern with dynasty is usually thought about in terms of land-holding and the estate, but it also spread to the house and its contents. Although these did not enjoy the protection of strict settlement, the obligations of retaining family collections served to constrain an individual's consumption choices. We should not overplay this constraint, of course; as with all elites, the Leighs were quite willing to sell off unwanted silver, dispose of paintings which they viewed as poor quality, and release unwanted furniture through house sales.⁹⁹ However, dynastic notions of family encouraged the retention of goods acquired by earlier generations, shaping not just the material culture of the country house, but also the consumption practices of their elite owners.

Notes

¹ SCLA, DR18/4/69, Inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1786.

² See Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution. Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 20-25 for a useful summary of the debates over consumption and consumer motivation. On the link between consumption and identity, see, *inter alia*: Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford, 1987); Woodruff Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600-1800* (London, 2002), pp. 189-222. Useful studies of elite consumption include: Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian England* (Oxford, 2013); Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor. Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2005); Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Basingstoke, 2003).

³ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: an Economic Study of Institutions* (1899; London, 1994).

⁴ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester, 2000), p. 233.

⁵ de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 45.

⁶ Christie, *British Country House*, 45; Peter Mathias, 'The social structure in the eighteenth century: a calculation by Joseph Massie,' in *The transformation of England: essays in the economic and social history of England in the Eighteenth century*, ed. Peter Mathias (London, 1979), pp. 171-89.

⁷ John Cannon, *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1987), 12-15. Cannon notes the inflation in the granting of peer ages but also emphasises the sustained exclusivity of the group as a proportion of the population.

⁸ de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 45. See also Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, pp. 81-2; Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 37-43; Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors. At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven, 2009), pp. 18-22, 98-103, 144-5.

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of Judgement and Taste* (London, 1986).

¹⁰ Greig, *The Beau Monde*, p. 3.

¹¹ Neil McKendrick, 'The consumer revolution of eighteenth-century England,' in *The Birth of the Consumer Society. The Commercialisation of Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Neil McKendrick, John Plumb and John Brewer (London, 1982), pp. 9-33; de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 45.

¹² Greig, *The Beau Monde*, pp. 32-4, 270-1; de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, 44-5, 144-9; Michael Kwass, 'Big

hair: a wig history of consumption in eighteenth-century France,' *American Historical Review*, 111 (June 2006), pp. 631-59; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 129-65; Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, p. 74.

¹³ See Margaret Ponsonby, *Stories from Home. English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 96-7. 65-71.

¹⁴ Bruno Blondé, 'Conflicting consumption models? The symbolic meaning of possessions and consumption amongst the Antwerp nobility at the end of the eighteenth century,' in *Fashioning Old and New, Changing Consumer Patterns in Western Europe, 1650-1900*, ed. Bruno Blondé, Natacha Coquery, Jon Stobart and Ilja van Damme (Turnhout, 2009), p. 67. See also Christie, *British Country House*, pp. 179-273; Gervase Jackson-Stopp, et al. *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House* (Washington D.C., 1989).

¹⁵ Glen McCracken, *Culture and Consumption. New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington, 1988), pp. 31-43.

¹⁶ Judith Lewis, 'When a house is not a home: elite English women and the eighteenth-century country house,' *Journal of British Studies*, 48, no.2 (April 2009), pp. 341, 352; G.E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1963), p. 209. See also John Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors* (New Haven, 2004), pp. 109-12, 215-36. On the importance of decoration to the meaning of goods, see Andrew Morrall, 'Ornament as evidence,' in Karen Harvey (ed.) *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London, 2009), pp. 47-66.

¹⁷ Defensive consumption is defined by de Vries as 'consuming goods to defend against the consequences of the consumption practices of others' – de Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 22.

¹⁸ Lewis, 'When a house is not a home'; Maxine Berg, 'Women's consumption and the industrial classes of eighteenth-century England,' *Journal of Social History*, 30 (1996), 415-34; McCracken, *Culture and Consumption*, pp. 44-53.

¹⁹ Colin Campbell, 'The desire for the new. Its nature and social location as presented in theories of fashion and modern consumerism,' in *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*, ed. Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch (London, 1992), pp. 48-64; David Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity* (Cambridge, 1997).

²⁰ Mingay, *English Landed Society*, pp. 209-217. For similar approaches for different periods see Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 249-267, F. M. L. Thompson, *English landed society in the nineteenth century* (London, 1963), pp. 76-108; Penelope Corfield's comments on

lineage and fashion in 'The Rivals: Landed and other gentlemen', in *Land and Society in Britain, 1700-1914: Essays in Honour of F. M. L. Thompson*, ed. Negley Harte and Roland Quinault (Manchester, 1996), pp. 3-10; Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven, 1978); Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors*; Christie, *British Country House*.

²¹ Mairi MacDonald, "'Not unmarked by some eccentricities': the Leigh family of Stoneleigh Abbey' in *Stoneleigh Abbey: The House, Its Owners, Its Lands*, ed. Robert Bearman (Stoneleigh, 2004), pp. 131-62, 149, 151, 153.

²² Mingay, *English Landed Society*, 19-20.

²³ Macdonald, "'Not unmarked by some eccentricities'", p. 144. On the Fifth Lord Leigh's attendance in the Lords see his obituary in *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, Tuesday 30 May, 1786; SCLA DR18/31/461, Auditor's Accounts of the Stoneleigh Estate, November 1763-May 1774.

²⁴ SCLA, DR18/5/4554. Edward donated his library and scientific instruments to the University. See SCLA, DR18/13/7/13-4, Will of Edward Lord Leigh, proved 22 July 1786.

²⁵ The Household Accounts for Grove House include lists of game sent from Stoneleigh to London (see DR18/31/656) and there are numerous bills for travel and leisure expenses in Cheltenham, including SCLA DR18/5/5861.

²⁶ For examples of each of these types of expenditure see respectively the following receipted bills: SCLA DR18/5/3965, Cloth for almsfolk's coats and gowns 31 December 1762; DR18/5/2564, coal for the poor, 9 June 1742; DR18/5/3612, Hospital Gowns, 29 December 1755; DR18/5/5106, repairs to Wooton Parish Church Chancel, 31 January 1774; DR18/5/5621, subscription for a new bridge on the public road at Cubbington, 10 September 1785; DR18/5/5850, subscription to girls school, 8 June 1789.

²⁷ Mingay, *English Landed Society*, p. 209.

²⁸ Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 164; Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic. Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 64-98. See also Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household. The World of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 26-48; Henry French and Mark Rothery, *Man's Estate: Landed Gentry Masculinities 1660-1900* (Oxford, 2012).

²⁹ For a discussion of the spending patterns of the Leighs in relation to rising levels of income see Mark Rothery and Jon Stobart, 'Inheritance Events and Spending Patterns in the English Country House: The

Leigh Family of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1738-1806,' *Continuity and Change*, 27 (2012), 379-407.

³⁰ For a fuller discussion of the building work, see Andor Gomme, 'Abbey into palace: a lesser Wilton?', in *Stoneleigh Abbey. The House, Its Owners, Its Lands*, ed. Robert Bearman (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2004), pp. 82-115.

³¹ Girouard, *English Country House*, pp. 119-62, 181-212.

³² Richard Wilson and Alan Mackley, *The Building of the English Country House* (London, 2000), pp. 131-5, 273-8, Lewis, 'When a house is not a home', p. 352.

³³ Wilson and Mackley, *Building of the English Country House*.

³⁴ For discussion and examples of state apartments, see: Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors*, pp. 3-19.

³⁵ Gomme, 'Abbey into palace', p. 87.

³⁶ SCLA, DR18/4/9, Inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey (1738). Red was a colour associated with nobility and variations, especially crimson, were frequently used in state apartments. See Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 174; Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors*, pp. 113-22.

³⁷ Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors*, pp. 75-106, 189-214; Geoffrey Beard, *Upholsterers and Interior Furnishing in England, 1530-1840* (New Haven, 1997), esp. pp. 205-54.

³⁸ SCLA, DR18/3/47/52/15 Bill presented by Thomas Burnett of London.

³⁹ Gomme, 'Abbey into palace', p.85; Dana Arnold, *The Georgian Country House. Architecture, Landscape and Society* (Frome, 1998), pp. 1-19.

⁴⁰ SCLA, DR671/33; Andor Gomme, 'Stoneleigh after the Grand Tour,' *The Antiquaries Journal*, lxxiii, no.2 (1988), pp. 274-5.

⁴¹ In 1760, Lord Willoughby commissioned a young Robert Adam to remodel Compton Verney, whilst James West and Sir Roger Newdigate, were engaged in gothicising Alscot Park and Arbury Hall respectively. Geoffrey Tyack, *Warwickshire Country Houses* (Chichester, 1994), pp. 64-70, 1-5, 9-15.

⁴² SCLA, DR671/33; Gomme, 'Abbey into palace', 103-114. The proposed north range was never built.

⁴³ Girouard, *English Country House*, pp. 181-212.

⁴⁴ Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors*, pp. 1-10, 217-26.

⁴⁵ Further examples can be found in Lucy Worsley, 'Female architectural patronage in the eighteenth century and the case of Henrietta Cavendish Holles Harley', *Architectural History*, 48 (2005), pp. 139-62 and John Cornforth, 'The backward look', in Gervase Jackson-Stops (ed.) *The Treasure Houses of Britain. Five*

Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting (Washington, 1985), pp. 60-69.

⁴⁶ SCLA, DR18/5/2178, DR18/5/2100, DR18/5/4251.

⁴⁷ Morrall, 'Ornament as evidence', p. 47; Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2005), p. 242.

⁴⁸ SCLA, DR18/4/27 and DR18/4/25 respectively. Unfortunately, no details are given about the subject or nature of these paintings. Given that all the portraits are accounted for in 1750, it seems likely that these were not significant family paintings. There is nothing to suggest that portraits were weeded for their artistic qualities.

⁴⁹ Kate Retford, 'Patrilineal portraiture? Gender and genealogy in the eighteenth-century English country house,' in *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven, 2006), p. 327. This process could sometimes be complicated by a desire to showcase the work of particular painters associated with the family: see Lewis, 'When a house is not a home', p. 361.

⁵⁰ Harvey, *Little Republic*, pp. 119, 172-4.

⁵¹ See Cornforth, 'Backward look'; Worsley, 'Female architectural patronage'.

⁵² Retford, 'Patrilineal portraiture', pp. 337-8; Adrian Tinniswood, *The Polite Tourist: Four Centuries of Country House Visiting* (New York, 1999), p. 108.

⁵³ Emily J. Climençon (ed.) *Passages from the Diaries of Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys, of Hardwick House, 1756-1808* (1899), pp. 53-4, 149-50.

⁵⁴ Retford, 'Patrilineal portraiture', 317; McCracken, *Culture and Consumption*, pp. 44-53.

⁵⁵ SCLA, DR671/33; Gomme, 'Abbey into palace', p. 97.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Tyack, *Warwickshire Country Houses*, 182-3 and Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors*, p. 113 respectively.

⁵⁷ Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors*, p. 13.

⁵⁸ De Vries, *Industrious Revolution*, p. 22.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Worsley, 'Female architectural patronage'.

⁶⁰ Denis Diderot, 'Regrets on parting with my old dressing gown', in *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works by Dennis Diderot* (trans. J. Barzun: New York, 1964), pp. 309-17.

⁶¹ Rothery and Stobart, 'Inheritance Events'.

⁶² Stobart, 'Gentlemen and shopkeepers', pp. 888-93.

⁶³ SCLA, DR18/5/4402.

⁶⁴ SCLA, DR18/5/4402.

⁶⁵ SCLA, DR18/5/1808, DR18/5/2047.

⁶⁶ SCLA, DR18/1845, DR18/5/2218, DR18/5/5890.

⁶⁷ SCLA, DR18/4/9 , Inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1738, DR18/4/59, Inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1806.

⁶⁸ SCLA, DR18/4/27, Inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1749.

⁶⁹ SCLA, DR18/4/9, Inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1738; Retford, 'Patrilineal portraiture'; Retford, *Art of Domestic Life*, chapter 5; Lewis, 'When a house is not a home', p. 361

⁷⁰ Ponsonby, *Stories from Home*, pp. 94-5.

⁷¹ Morrall, 'Ornamentation as evidence'.

⁷² SCLA, DR18/5/1932.

⁷³ Harvey, *Little Republic*, esp. pp. 64-98; Whittle and Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender*, pp. 26-43; Waugh, 'Material culture of Audley End', chapter 2.

⁷⁴ SCLA, DR18/5/5980, 6023; Stobart and Rothery, 'Inheritance events'.

⁷⁵ Mingay, *English Landed Society*, pp. 209-217; Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors*, p. 13.

⁷⁶ See Rosie MacArthur and Jon Stobart, 'Going for a song? Country house sales in Georgian England', in *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade. European Consumption Cultures and Practices, 1700-1900*, ed. Jon Stobart and Ilja Van Damme (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 175-95; R. J. Gemmett, 'The tinsel of fashion and the gewgaws of luxury': the Fonthill sale of 1801', *The Burlington Magazine*, CL (2008), pp. 381-8; Jon Stobart, 'Luxury and country house sales in England, c.1760-1830', in Anne Fennetaux, Amelie Junqua and Sophie Vasset (eds), *The Afterlife of Use Things. Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Basingstoke, forthcoming, 2013).

⁷⁷ SCLA, DR18/1/815. Comparing this list of 'Goods Left' with the 1738 inventory allows us to see which items were removed to Guys Cliff.

⁷⁸ SCLA, DR18/4/26, Inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1750.

⁷⁹ MacDonald, 'The Leigh family', 149.

⁸⁰ SCLA, DR18/3/3, DR18/3/5 (letters) and DR18/3/4 (inventory of paintings).

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- ⁸¹ SCLA, DR18/4/69, Inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1786; DR18/4/59, Inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1806.
- ⁸² SCLA, DR18/4/59, Inventory, 1806.
- ⁸³ SCLA, DR18/5/4402.
- ⁸⁴ Waugh, 'Material culture of Audley End', chapter 1.
- ⁸⁵ Most of the chairs are listed as present in the lumber room in 1774: SCLA, DR18/4/43, Inventory, 1774.
- ⁸⁶ SCLA, DR18/4/27, Inventory, 1749.
- ⁸⁷ SCLA, DR18/4/9, Inventory, 1738; DR18/4/27, Inventory, 1749.
- ⁸⁸ Clive Edwards, *Encyclopaedia of Furnishing Textiles, Floorcoverings and Home Furnishing Practices, 1200-1950* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 163.
- ⁸⁹ SCLA, DR18/4/43, Inventory, 1774.
- ⁹⁰ SCLA, DR18/4/59, Inventory, 1806.
- ⁹¹ Humphrey Repton, *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (London, 1816).
- ⁹² See, for example, Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 274-9.
- ⁹³ SCLA, DR18/4/9, Inventory, 1738; DR18/4/27, Inventory, 1749; DR18/4/43, Inventory, 1774.
- ⁹⁴ Sara Pennell, 'Invisible mending? Ceramic repair in eighteenth-century England', in Ariane Fennetaux, Amelie Junqua and Sophie Vasset (eds) *The Afterlife of Used Things Recycling in the Long Eighteenth Century* (London, forthcoming, 2014).
- ⁹⁵ Campbell, 'Understanding consumption', 48; Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Consumerism* (Oxford, 1987), p. 203.
- ⁹⁶ Rothery and Stobart, 'Inheritance events'.
- ⁹⁷ Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 151.
- ⁹⁸ See Berg, 'Women's property'.
- ⁹⁹ SCLA, DR18/5/5809, DR18/3/3, DR18/3/5, DR18/1/815.